



The California Master Plan for Education

Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) Courses Frequently asked questions and answers

Q. Does the Master Plan for Education recommend eliminating Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses in public schools?

A. No. The Master Plan recommends that public colleges and universities stop giving extra weight to grades earned in AP and IB courses when calculating the grade point averages (GPAs) of high school graduates applying for admission. This practice is ineffective and unfair because AP and IB courses are not available to all students. It has resulted in disproportionate value being given to the grades earned by students with greater access to AP and IB courses and uneven competition for admission to highly selective university campuses.

Q. If AP and IB courses are not given more weight in the college admission process, won't students be less motivated to take these more difficult courses and, therefore, be less prepared for success?

A. Not necessarily. First, preparation for success should not be restricted to enrollment in AP and IB courses. Colleges and universities can, and should continue to, award college credit to high school students who complete AP and IB courses and earn high scores on Advanced Placement tests. Hence, college-bound students will be motivated to take these courses so that they can complete college more quickly, or take more elective courses while they are there. This will continue to be a powerful incentive for many students who aspire to attend college and earn their degrees in a timely manner, and their families, who often worry about meeting the cost of college attendance.

Q. Why isn't the problem solved by offering more AP and IB courses?

A. Two reasons. First, ensuring that every student has access to AP and IB courses may take a very long time, to the detriment of students now and soon-to-be enrolled in high school. Second, students need more than access to those courses – they need teachers qualified to teach them and the right preparation and learning support mechanisms to succeed in them. Bringing only the courses to students without providing the academic tools to succeed could result in a further extension of the achievement gap among students. Students voluntarily enrolling in AP and IB courses should have confidence that they are prepared to succeed in those courses.

Q. Why was this recommendation included in the Master Plan?

A. The Master Plan seeks to ensure that **all** students, not just those that are perceived to be on the college track, receive a rigorous educational experience that prepares them for life's options. Admission to a college or university should not be more difficult for those who did not have access to AP or IB courses, or to the learning support mechanisms necessary to succeed in those courses. All students should receive an education that gives them the option of starting college or a career after high school and that provides them the skills to be successful with either choice. Less should not be expected of students choosing to pursue career paths after high school. Nor should less be expected of the teachers who teach them. It also seeks to reduce the competitive inequities of college applicants by limiting GPAs to a 4.0 maximum as long as California continues to use a 4-point scale for calculating grade point averages.